A True and Exact

RELATION

Of the Late

Prodigious Earthquake and Eruption

OF

Mount Ætna,

Or, *MONTE-GIBELLO:*

As it came in a *LETTER*

Written to his Majesty from Naples

By the Right Honourable

The Earle of *Winchilsea*,

His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his Return from thence, Visiting *Catania* in the Island of *Sicily*, was an Eye-witnesse of *That Dreadfull Spectacle.*

Together with a more particular *Narrative* of the same as it is Collected out of several Relations sent from *Catania.*

Published by Authority.

EDINBURGH,
Re-printed in the Year, 1669.

A true and exact Relation of the late prodigious Earthquake and Eruption of the Mount *Aetna*, or *Monte-Gibello*, as it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from *Naples*, by the right Honourable the Earl of *Winchilsea*, His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his return from thence, visited *Catania*, an eye-witnesse of that Dreadful Spectacle.

May it please your MAJESTY,

IN my Voyage from Malta *to this place, wherein I have used all the diligence the season hath given me leave, I touched at the City of* Catania *in* Sicily, *and was there most kindly invited by the* Bishop *to lodge in his Palace which I accepted, that so I might be the better able to inform Your Majesty of that extraordinary Fire, which comes from Mount* Gibel 15 *miles distant from that City; which for its horridness in the aspect, for the vast quantity thereof, (for it is 15 miles in length, and 7 in breadth) for its monstrous devastation, and quick progresse may be termed an Inundation of Fire, a Flood of Fire, Cinders and burning Stones, burning with that Rage as to advance into the Sea 600 yards, and that to a mile in breadth, which I saw; and that which did augment my admiration was, to see in the Sea this matter like ragged rocks, burning in four fathom water, two fathom higher then the Sea it self, some parts liquid and moving, and throwing off, not without great violence, the stones about it, which like a crust of a vast bigness, and red hot, fell into the Sea every moment, in some place or other, causing a great and horrible noise, smoak and hissing in the Sea; and thus more and more coming after it, making a firm foundation in the Sea it self. I stayed there from nine a Clock on Saturday morning, to seven next morning, and this Mountain of Fire and Stones, with Cinders, had advanced into the Sea 20 yards at least, in several places; in the middle of this Fire, which burn'd in the Sea, it hath form'd a passage like to a River, with its Banks on each side very steep and craggy, and in this Channel moves the greatest quantity of this Fire, which is the most liquid, with Stones of the same composition and Cinders all red hot, swimming upon the fire of a great magnitude; from this River of fire doth proceed under the great Masse of the Stones which are generally three fathom high all over the Country where it burns, & in other places much more: there are secret Conduits or Rivulets of this liquid matter which communicates fire and heat into all parts more or less, and melts the stones & cinders by fits in those places where it toucheth them, over and over again; where*

it meets with Rocks or Houses of the same matter (as many are) they melt and go away with the Fire; where they find other compositions they turn them to lime or ashes, (as I am informed.) The composition of this Fire, Stones and Cinders, are Sulphur, Nitre, Quick-silver, Sal-Armoniac, Lead, Iron, Brasse, and all other Mettals. It moves not regularly, nor constantly down hill; in some places it hath made the Valleys Hills, and the Hills that are not high are now Valleys. When it was night I went upon two Towers in divers places, and could plainly see at 10 miles distance, as we judged, the Fire to begin to run from the Mountain in a direct line, the flame to ascend as high and as big as one of the highest and greatest Steeples in Your Majesties Kingdoms, and to throw up great Stones into the Air; I could discern the River of Fire to descend the Mountain of a terrible fiery or red colour, and stones of a paler Red, to swim thereon. and to be, some as big as an ordinary Table. We could see this Fire to move in several other places, and all the Country covered with Fire, ascending with great Flames, in many places, smoaking like to a violent furnace of iron melted, making a noise with great pieces that fell, especially those which fell into the Sea. A Cavalier of Malta, who lives there, and attended me, told me, that the River was as liquid where it issues out of the Mountain, as water, and came out like a Torrent with great violence, and is five or six fathom deep, and as broad, and that no stones do sink therein. I assure your Majesty, no Pen can expresse how terrible it is, nor can all the Art and Industry of the world quench, or divert that which is burning in the Country. In 40 dayes time it hath destroyed the habitations of 27 thousand persons, made two Hills of one, 1000 paces high, a piece, and one is four miles in compass. Of 20000 persons which inhabited Catania, 3000 did only remain; all their Goods are carried away. the Cannons of Brasse are removed out of the Castle, some great Bells taken down, the City-Gates Walled up next the Fire, and preparation made all to abandon the City.

That Night which I lay there, it Rained Ashes all over the City, and Ten Miles at Sea it troubled my Eyes. This Fire in its Progresse met with a Lake of four Miles in compass, and it was not only satisfied to fill it up, though it was four fathom deep, but hath made of it a Mountain.

I send also to Your Sacred Majesty a Relation in Print which the Bishop gave me, wherein the Beginning is Related & several curious Passages. I most humbly beseech Your Pardon for the hindring Your Majesty so long from Your better Employments: And I beseech You, Great Sir, ever to believe I Love and Reverence Your Person above All Expression: for, I am

Naples the 27 of April,
7 of May. 1669.

Your Majesties Most Obedient Most Humble, and Most Faithful Subject and Servant,
WINCHILSEA.

A Particular

NARRATIVE

Of the late Dreadful

Earthquake,

AND

IRRUPTION

As it is Collected out of several Relations from

CATANIA.

MOunt *Ætna*, or *Monte Gibello*, a Mountain so Renowned throughout the World for its height and greatnesse, but much more for those prodigious Flames, Smoak, and Ashes which it hath cast out from the top of it, whilst the other parts are continually (even in the midst of Summer) cover'd with Snow, has been for many Ages observ'd once, or sometimes oftner, in the space of about fifteen years, to throw up more than ordinary Flames with much Smoak and stones, and great quantities of Ashes; which (though terrible to the neighbouring Towns and Villages) was yet wont, in little time, to abate of its fury, and prove but seldom more injurious to the Country near it, than by communicating largely its ashes, which though for the present it did somewhat incommode them, they had afterwards a considerable Compensation in the product of their Lands, which by this means were render'd more fruitful.

But on Friday the $\frac{11}{21}$ of *March* 1669. the Sun was observed before its setting to appear of a pale and dead colour, which (being contrary to what it ever before appeared to us) struck no smal terror into the inhabitants, all Objects appearing also of the same colour, with a paleness received from that of the Sun. The same night happened in this City as well as the whole Countrey hereabouts, a terrible and unusual Earthquake, whose strong and unequal motions, joyned with horrible Roarings from *Monte Gibello* exceedingly frighted the Inhabitants, but was

so extraordinarily violent in the Countrey adjacent, that the people were forced to abandon their houses and to fly into the Fields to avoid the danger threatned them from the falling of their houses. The Village of *Nicolosi* was of all others the most dreadfully handled by this furious Earthquake, the houses and other buildings being shaken all in pieces, and buried in their own Ruines; the poor People (who had preserved their lives by a timely flight, with such little of their Goods as their hasty fears would permit them to carry out with them) continued a night or two in the fields, beholding with grief and astonishment the ruine of their habitations: but observing that by these violent concussions, the Earth began to open in several places, and to threaten them with inevitable ruine, they fled, though with much trouble and amazement to this City. These shakings of the Earth being so frequent and violent, that the People went reeling and staggering, with much difficulty supporting one another from falling, in so much as what with their want of sleep, the pains they were forced to take in travelling, and the great terrors imprinted on them by what they had seen and suffered; they appeared at their arrival in this City as so many distracted People, wholly insensible of what they did.

This dreadful convulsion of the Earth was immediatly followed on Monday *March* 11. about 10, at night by 3. terrible Eruptions, much about the same time, and at little distance one from the other.

These said Eruptions were observed to be on the side of *Monte Gibello*, about 2 miles beyond the Mountain called *Montpileri*, from whence, with a terrible noise it threw up its flames, with much fury and violence about a hundred yards in hight, its noise not roaring only inwards from the belly of the Mountain as before, but violence cracking like peales of Ordinance or thunder, from the side of it throwing out vast stones, some of them of 300. pound weight, which being (as it were) shot through the air, fell several miles distant from the place, whilest the whole air was filled with smoak, burning Cinders, and ashes, which fell like a fiery rain upon the Countrey.

In the mean time issued from the side of this prodigious Mountain, a vast Torrent of Melted and burning Matter, which, like an Inundation Drowned, as in a flood of Fire, the Countrey on this side of it.

This Burning River ran down upon the Mountain *Montpileri*, which, opposing its direct course, it divided it self into two Streames, which, encompassed the said Mountain; one of them taking its way by *La Guardia* the *Convent* of St. *Anne*, & *Malpasso*, the other by the towns of *Montpileri*, and *Falicchi*, which in few hours were wholly destroyed and lost, not so much as any sign of them remaining, with several lesser Villages and Farmes,

Farmes, and with them the Famous *Image* of the blessed Lady of the *Annunciata*; which, though highly Reverenced throughout the whole *Island*, esteemed the Wonder of *Sicily* and the whole World, and to which the People with much Devotion resorted in Pilgrimage from the remotest parts, was all swallowed up and consumed by this dreadfull Torrent.

This Fiery and burning Deluge immediately spread it self to above six mile in breadth, seeming to be somewhat of the colour of melted and burning Glass; but, as it cooles, becomes hard and Rocky, and every where in its passage leaves Hills and Pyramids of that Matter behind it.

At the same time *Mount Gibello* from its top raged with dreadfull Flames, which with its Noise and Concussions of the Earth still continuing, added not a little to the Terror of the People, who ran with Cries and Lamentations about the City and Country, expecting nothing but to be swallowed up, or consumed by Fire, having no other apprehensions but of Death, and a General Conflagration.

The two Torrents of Fire forward, destroying all things in their way, and by Wednesday, *March* 13th, had on the West-side branched it self into several Streams, and over-ran *Campo Rotundo*, St. *Pietro*, and *Mostorbiance*, with *La Poiselli*, and St. *Antonino*; and on the East-part ruin'd the lower part of *Mascalucia*, and *Le Plauchi*, taking its way towards this City.

On *Thursday* the 14th, the Wind came Eastwards, on which day fell abundance of Rain, which abated not the progresse of the Fire; which on the East-side had from *Mascalucia* made its way to St. *Giovanni di Galermo*, the lower part whereof it destroy'd; and passing on, seem'd to threaten this City on one side, as did that on the West-side the other.

As the Fire approached, the Religious every where appeared with much Devotion, carrying in Procession their Reliques, especially those of St. *Agatha*, the famous Martyr of *Catania*, in which they reposed no small confidence, followed by great Multitudes of People, some of them Mortifying themselves with Whips, and other signes of Pennance, with great Complaints and Cryes, expressing their dreadful expectation of the Events of those Prodigious Fiery Inundations.

Whil'st the People were thus busied in their Devotions, and astonisht by their feares, News was brought to the Magistrates of the City, that a considerable number of Thieves and Robbers had taken the opportunity of this general Distraction, to make a Prey of the already distressed People, and that they had Murdered several of them for their Goods; and that it was to be fear'd, that the City of *Catania* it self might run some danger from the great numbers of them which were about the

Coun-

Country, and from thence took their opportunities to get into the Town. Whereupon, consultation being had for the prevention of farther mischief from them, the Commander of the Castle was Ordered with a considerable number of Horse, and a party of *Spaniards*, to secure the Country and City against these Robbers, who immediately sent out several Parties with his Provost-Marshal, with Order to seize on all suspected Persons, and such as were not able to give a good account of themselves: and, for such as were taken in the Fact Robbing, to Execute them by Martiall-Law, without any farther Tryal; and accordingly caused three Pair of Gallowes to be set up for their speedy Execution; one before the Gate *Di Aci*, a second in the *Market place*, and a third before the Gate *Della Decima*, setting strong Guards upon the Gates of the City, and causing all suspected Houses to be searched, an Account to be given in of all Lodgers, and such persons to be secured, as could any wayes fall under a Suspition.

The poor people out of the country being by this prodigious Calamity stript out of all their Estates, and reduced to great extremity, fled most of them for refuge and relief to this City, with great Lamentations, moving the Charity of the Magistrates, which was readily inclined to give them the best assistance they were able; and the Citizens moved by their Complaints and sufferings, freely open'd their Doors, filling their Houses with as many of those distressed people, as they could possibly receive; the Bishop and all persons of Quality and Estate contributing largely for their support, till better Order could be taken for the disposing of them.

The City of *Messina* also, and several other Cities (informed of this extraordinary Calamity) sent hither large Supplies of provision, offering their best assistance to this place in case of extremity.

All the Elements seemed at this time to make War upon us, and to conspire together for the punishment of the Inhabitants: The Ayre was continually darkened with Clouds and Smoke, agitated by great and violent Winds, and oftentimes showred down great Rains, insomuch as the Sun from the beginning of these Eruptions, very seldome appeared unto us; and when it did, (with extraordinary paleness) for a little time only, and (as it were, abhorring so dreadful a spectacle) soon hid its face again under a thick Cloud.

The Sea ran much higher then it was wont to do, and by its extraordinary Roaring, and in some places over-flowing its Banks, added not a little to our consternation. The Land every where infested with theeves, insomuch, that till by the extraordinary care taken by the Magistrates and Officers, severe execution was done upon such as were apprehended in the Fact, no person was able to stirr abroad without danger of his life: whilst the Fire by this prodigious over-flowing of the Mountain, threatned to take possession of all.

On

On Friday the 17th the ſtream of fiery Matter which deſtroyed the lower part of *St. Giovanni di Galerno* divided it ſelf into two parts, one of its branches taking its way toward *Moſterbianco*, the other threatning the City of *Catania*, but this laſt was obſerved to move with more ſlowneſſe then before, having in 24. hours time ſcarcely gained one mile.

On the 18th being Monday, the Torrents being ſtill ſeen to draw nearer and nearer to this City, the Senat with Monſegnio *Camuchi* the Biſhop of this place, followed by all the Clergy Secular and Regular, and an infinite number of people went in a ſolemn proceſſion out of this City to *Monte de St. Sofia*, carrying out with greateſt Devotion their choic ſt Relicks, and upon an Altar erected in the view of the Mountain, expoſed them, where they celebrated Maſs & uſed the Exorciſms accuſtom'd upon ſuch an extraordinary occaſions, all which time the Mountain ceaſed not as before with exceſſive roaring to throw up its ſmoak and flames with extraordinary violence and abundance of great ſtones, which were carried through the Air, ſome of them falling within their view, though ten miles diſtance from the Eruption: the Aſhes which proceeded from thence were ſcattered in great abundance as wel on this City as on the Country adjacent, every where in the Fields with Cinders, and the heat of the ſaid Aſhes deſtroying the Graſs, which obliged the people to drive away their Cattle to a farther diſtance, which would otherwiſe have periſhed for want of food.

These ſtreams of mine daily crept nearer and nearer to this City, but by uneven and irregular motions, according as it was more or leſs ſupply'd from its fountain; but on wedneſday the 20th we perceived that that branch of it which ſeemed moſt to threaten this City from *St. Giovanni di Galerno* wholly extinguiſht, and the other which bent its courſe towards *Moſterbianco* ran but ſlowly and gave us ſome hopes that its fury was alſo near ſpent, but the other Torent which had before overflowen *Moſterbianco*, continued its motion with as much violence as ever, being in breadth above a Muſquet ſhot over; but in probability could not eaſily over-flow to the Weſtwards which was defended by its Rocky ſcituation; another branch which ran by *Santo Pietro* was obſerved to be much larger than the reſt, and its ſtream more quick and active, but meeting with ſome oppoſition in its way, it made ſome ſtop, onely ſending out a Rivolet towards the Eaſtwards about three or four yards wide off its moſt ſubtile and active matter which directed its courſe towards a ſmall Village about a furlong diſtant from its main ſtream; another Branch threatned *Campo Rotundo*. but bent its courſe weſtwards towards the Farme of *Valcarrente*, where its Fiery body was ſcattered into ſeveral deep and rocky places, without any conſiderable damage.

About this time we had hopes that the violence of this eruption had been over, the Mountain not throwing out its flames with that violence as before, and its noise and roaring in a great measure ceased.

Those who at neareſt diſtance took a view of the Mountain, informed, that the top of it was fallen in, and the Mountain ſuppoſed to want near a mile of its former height; that that largeſt of the Mouths from whence theſe Fiery ſtreams were vented, was about half a mile in compaſſe, but the view of this dreadfull inundation carried ſo much terror in it as they were not able to expreſſe; from all theſe Mouths were vomited Rivers of a thick and fiery ſubſtance of ſtone and Metals melted, whoſe deep was various according to the ſeverall places it filled in its paſſage, in ſome places 4. in others 8, 12, or 15. yards and upwards; its breadth in ſome places 6 miles, in others much more, its flame like that of Brimſtone, and its motion like that of Quickſilver; advancing ordinarily very ſlowly unleſſe where it was provoked by the addition of a freſh Torrant or ſome conſiderable deſcent. Whereſoever it paſſed, it left large heaps of its congealed matter, with which it covered and burnt the earth, melting the walls of Caſtels and Houſes, throwing down and conſuming all before it, nothing being yet found able to reſiſt its force, nor any thing able to quench its burning, water being obſerved rather to add to its fury: whereſoever it has paſſed, it has left its dreadfull marks behind it, levelling ſome hills and raiſing others, ſo much changing the ſcituation, that not the leaſt trace of any place or Town remains, nothing being to be ſeen but confuſed heaps of ragged ſtone, which yeelded a noiſome fume, ſtrikes terror and aſtoniſhment into all that behold it.

On Friday the 22, the Mountain again roared with much loudneſſe, and threw up from its mouths a vaſt quantity of matter, which formed two large hills higher and larger then that of *Montpelori*, with a large bank of the ſame matter to the Eaſtward, ſending down a violent ſtream of its liquid matter towards *Malpaſſo*, much enlarging the former Current, and paſſing thence to *Campo Rotundo* and *Santo Pietro* compleated the ruines of thoſe Towns, driving furiouſly towards *Moſter-bianco*; the other ſtream by *Santo Giovanni de Galermo* being wholly diverted and extinguiſht.

From this time till the 25th the Mountain continued ſilent, but then it burſt out again with more force than ever before, its noiſe much louder, like Peals of Ordenance, and ſo forcible and laſting, as for 24 hours it cauſed a ſhaking and trembling in our buildings, the Ayre ſo filled with Smoak and Aſhes, as darkned the Face of the Sky.

The Birds and Fowls about this time, either through want of Food,

or Ashes of Aire, which was corrupt with the noysome smells arising from these Burnings, were observed to lye dead in all places.

On the 28th the Grand Currant was advanced near the City as far as the old *Capucins*, which struck so great a Terror into the People, that most of them left the City, only some Officers remaining with such persons as were under their command, who have secured and sent away the *Magazine* and all the Artillery from the Castle.

A *Later* Relation *from* Catania, *bearing Date the* 27*th of* April *gives us this further Account*: viz.

THe Dreadful Inundation from *Monte Gibello* having destroyed many *Castles* and *Towns* with an infinite loss, and utter ruine to the Inhabitants, arrived lately with a renewed Force at *Mosterbianco*, which it has wholly ruin'd, from thence passing on to *Albavelli*, in four Days space destroyed all the Gardens and Vineyards with 63 thousand Vines.

On *Wednesday*, *April* 26. With an Impetuous fiery Torrent it came towards *Sardanelle*, where all the remainder of the Inhabitants of this City were Spectators of it, which resembled a River of melted & burning Brass about ten Ells wide, running with swiftnesse to the Arch of *Marcus Marcellus*, a Famous Piece of Antiquity, and passing under it ruin'd about 6 Ells of it, which was the breadth of the Current in that place: from thence it ran to *Madonna di Monserrato*, which it wholly destroyed: then falling down to *Madonna delle Gratie* it entered in at one Gate, and passed through another, without any considerable hurt, and running through the Gate *Della Decima*, filled all the plain *Di Sebira Viva*, where it was above six Ells deep. Then taking its way towards the Bulwark, on the Sea-side, under the Castle of this City, it ran by two Ells deep into the Sea; in which, (to the great wonder of all that saw it) it has made its progress a mile in length and as much in breadth, and is drawing towards the Gate of the Channel, which gives us great Apprehensions, lest it may that way Invade the City it selfe: Nor is there less Danger on the side *Del Tindaro*, where there runs a great Torrent of the same Active matter, which drawes near, and seems to threaten the Walls, and as in that place about a mile in breadth, having over-flowed and destroyed all the Gardens, from the Gate *Della Decima*, as farr as *Madona delli Amellati*.

A LIST *of the most considerable* Towns *and places Ruin'd and destroyed by the Dreadfull* Earth quake *and* Eruptions.

THe Town of *Nicolosi* wholly Ruin'd by the *Earthquake*.

The Towns of	*Padara*, *Tre Castagne*,	the greatest part destroyed by the Earthquake.
The Towns of	*La Guardia*, *Malpasso*, *Campo Rotundo*, *La Potielli*, St. *Antonino*, St. *Pietro*, *Mostorbianco*, *Montpileri*, *La Annunciata*, *Falicchi*, *Placchi*,	Wholly Overflowed, Consumed and lost in this Fiery Inundation, with all the Lands belonging to them, no Footsteps of them remaining.
The Towns of	*Mascalacia*, *S. Giovanni de Galermo*,	Ruin'd in part.

The Large *Gardens* and *Vineyards* of *Albanelli Overflown* and *Destroyed*.

The Famous Piece of *Antiquity* of *Marcus Marcellus* much Ruin'd.

Madonna de Monserrato destroyed, besides many *Castles*, *Farmes*, and other Places, which have the same Fortune, whose Names we for brevity pass over.

FINIS.